
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: James E. Little, Chief, Long Valley Fire Protection District

Finding: Section 4129 of the California Public Resources Code should be amended to provide for the protection of SRA by any fire district with in the Tahoe Basin

Background and Supporting Evidence: Existing statute (PRC Section 4129) allows any county with in the state to assume responsibility for the prevention and suppression of fires on SRA with in the county. There are presently several counties within California that have elected to provide fire protection as provided under Section 4129. This has proven to be beneficial to both the state and the counties that have utilized this provision. Because of the unique circumstances that exist within the Tahoe Basin it appears that a similar system would be both tactically and financially beneficial. The consolidation of fire prevention and suppression responsibilities within the basin will have a number of significant benefits. Reducing the number of agencies with fire protection responsibilities will reduce the administrative costs as well as reduce the need for duplicate fire suppression assets. The local agencies can provide direct fire protection to the SRA lands now protected by the US Forest Service. This will allow for the protection of these lands at a level that is consistent with the existing level of protection on other SRA lands outside the basin. This level of protection can be provided at cost significantly less than the cost of establishing new CDF stations within the basin. Existing stations and possibly some existing staffing and equipment could be used to meet the obligations under a state contract. Additional staffing and equipment can be acquired at a cost that would be no more and potentially significantly less than the cost of up staffing the CDF with in the basin. Providing state funding to local government for the protection of SRA will enhance the local agencies assets while providing for additional state resources. As with the existing county contracts the state funded local resources can be utilized as any other state resource. The local agency can provide the same level of protection on a seasonal bases without incurring the year round costs now associated with the CDF labor agreement.

Recommendation(s): It is recommended that Section 4129 of the California Public Resources Code be amended to include the following additional language: The board of supervisors of any county, or the board of directors of any fire district with in the Tahoe Basin may provide by ordinance that the county or district elects to

assume responsibility for the prevention and suppression of all fires on all lands with in the county or district, including lands within state responsibility areas... Further portions of this section and subsequent sections dealing with contract counties should be amended to conform to the inclusion of contract districts.

Impacts of Implementation:

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

- ☐ Cost: It should be assumed that the reduction in overlapping responsibilities for fire prevention and suppression will provide for significant cost savings. The impact on the exchange of acres between the state and federal government may have some negative cost impact to the state. This however is an issue that will need to be address regardless of the recommendations that develop from this commission.
- ☐ Funding source: Funds will need to come from the general fund and the operating budget of the CDF. It must be assumed that a new system of fire protection for SRA will evolve within the basin. Funding that will be available for the expansion of the CDF presence within the basin could also be available for implementing a local contract.
- ☐ Staffing: would be provided by the local agency entering into the contract. As provided with in Section 4132 funding will be provided based on the costs as would be incurred if the CDF provided the protection. Local government should have greater flexibility in providing staffing which should equate to a cost savings.
- ☐ Existing regulations and/or laws: PRC Section 4129

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational: Operations within the basin should be improved. A single agency or at least fewer agencies should provide for a reduction in operational conflicts that typically arise during incidents that involve multiple agencies.
- ☐ Social: Unknown
- ☐ Political: There will surely be resistance at the state level to relinquishing the responsibility for fire protection to a local agency. However, in the basin it will merely be transferring responsibility fro the Forest Service to local government.
- ☐ Policy: I assume existing policy within the CDF is to discourage any new contracts under Section 4132. It is however the responsibility of

the Board of Forestry to establish policies as it relates to the allocation of fire protection assets within the state. The Board has the broader perspective of resource management to guide it in its policy making role. Hearings before the Board where the cost/benefits can be weighed is the appropriate arena for establishing policy in this area.

- ☐ Health and Safety: It must be assumed that the local agencies can significantly enhance the basins fire protection with the addition of state funding. Additional state assets will be available to the basin just as they are available to the existing contract counties. The net result will be increased fire protection at a cost which is less than the alternative of establishing CDF stations within the basin
- ☐ Environmental: Added fire protection within the basin.
- ☐ Interagency: This proposal will reduce the overlap of protection within the basin while providing a higher level of protection on SRA lands.